

A Moment to Reflect

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Summary: A brief one-shot expanding the scene in Halo 3 when Master Chief finds Cortana. A fluffy moment of introspection. What is he feeling as he holds Cortana in his hands?

A Moment to Reflect

****Just a very fluffy little one-shot (at least for Chief) reliving the moment in Halo 3 where Master Chief finds Cortana. The moment between them lasted maybe ten seconds and then it was boom, continue on with the mission. Obviously Chief isn't the type of guy to idle and ponder his emotions. This one-shot is what I would have liked to happen. A brief moment of reflection. He might not love her yet but he's going to and he's starting to realize it. Yep, serious gamers are gonna be like, seriously? And I apologize in advance if I got anything wrong. Loved playing the game, just don't know much of the mechanics and back-story behind everything. And obviously I've taken some liberties with Master Chief.****

****I don't Halo 3 or any of the characters. The dialogue is taken directly from Halo 3.****

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><p>She was lying down, weakened when he found her so he crouched until she could stand. "You found meâ€|.but so much of me is wrong - out of place. You might be too late." She was dimmer than he'd ever seen her, rampancy a real danger at this moment. He couldn't let that happen.<p>

"You know me. When I make a promiseâ€|"

He could see the ghost of a smile on her face and it caused a warm glow in his chest. "â€|you keep it." Her glow returned and he could have sighed in relief. " I do know how to pick 'em."

She would be okay. That was all the confirmation he needed. "Lucky me."

He grabbed the data crystal chip from his helmet and held it out to her. She disappeared in a moment. He moved to put her back where she belonged. Back where thoughts were shared and where neither of them felt so alone. But he hesitated for the briefest moment, lost in thought. This was a dangerous time to remain in one place for more than a few seconds and the urgency of the mission had not abated simply because he had found Cortana. But he needed this moment to pull himself together, to rejoice in the victory of her recovery. He had never been overwhelmed by emotion before but perhaps there was a first for everything, an exception for his near loss.

He was at a loss to explain what he felt when he held the data crystal she was hidden in. Confusion first, mixed with relief. She was safe, uncorrupted and she was back with him, exactly where she belonged. Of course the word, belong was relative. Higher ranking members of the UNSC would argue that Cortana was the property of the UNSC, and belonged wherever they assigned her. But then he was certain that by now they all agreed that she would never be with anyone but Master Chief. She belonged with him, and when she was apart from him he felt like he wasn't whole, like an entire piece of him was missing. But he was trained to be unfeeling, he was raised in a facility that lacked comfort. Comfort was not part of a Spartan's vocabulary. The word itself felt wrong. And yet when Cortana was with him, he felt exactly that, comfort. Did this make him weaker? His training told him yes but perhaps the evidence pointed to otherwise. He was one of only three Spartan II's left. And he felt immeasurable sadness at the loss of so many before him. Cortana called it luck and it was true, but he knew that where she steered he followed, and she had never steered him wrong.

So what was this feeling? He stared at the small piece of technology he held, dwarfed by the sheer size of his hands. He felt happy, if he could ever feel it. Happy. She was back with him and he was determined that they wouldn't be parted again. Of course a little voice reminded him that, actually they would be separated again, permanently. Rampancy had no cure and Cortana was living on borrowed time already. The attacks from Gravemind, and sheer amount of information she'd sorted through on a continual basis was sure to be cutting her life span by precious months. He cradled her in his hands and fought against the urge to mourn. She wasn't gone yet and he had years yet to find a way to keep her alive. There was no other option.

It never occurred to him that Cortana was an A.I., so therefore she wasn't really alive. To him she was Cortana, his friend, his guide, a part of him. There was no one he felt more comfortable around. The people he was surrounded with were people he considered comrades and friends but they would die, as so many had before them. He tried not to think too much on the amount of people he respected who had died. It was his way of life, the only life he had known. People died, and he was forced to move on. Very quickly in most cases. Sometimes it exhausted him, the complete lockdown he had on his emotions. He was Master Chief and he was the one who everyone expected to watch his peers fall and then callously jump over their bodies and continue on with the mission. He wasn't expected to feel, and he wasn't supposed to care for the men he had to leave behind. So he kept up the façade

that wasn't much of a façade and he clung to the one being he was allowed to. Cortana. There were whispers of their relationship. Many ODS's made crude remarks but he wasn't supposed to care, so he chose to walk right passed them. They applauded his quick thinking, his ability to compartmentalize on the field. They hailed him as humanity's great warrior and their symbol of hope. But many still ridiculed his lack of discernible emotion; they still feared him, even as they viewed him with a sort of misplaced awe. Would there even be a place for him in a war-free galaxy? No, he wasn't made for a peaceful life. Not like other soldiers. He might not have lasted this long without Cortana by his side. She never offered false sympathy; she merely told him to focus and move past it. So he did.

He thought back on the few nights where it had been just Cortana and him. He hadn't been Master Chief or a Spartan then, he had been simply, John. And it had felt natural. There was nothing to do but talk as he checked and rechecked his weapons. The subjects they spoke about were varied, from the human condition to what rifle worked better in close quarters. They never talked of family, or the future, both well aware that family was out of the question and the future wasn't guaranteed past the next breath. He was well-educated within a few weeks. In fact saying they talked was misleading, Cortana did most of the speaking and that was fine with him. Her voice was pleasant and he enjoyed just listening. She teased him often about his quiet nature but they were both aware that anything he would have to say was already known, shared when she interfaced with his helmet. Saying the words out loud would be pointless. After only a couple weeks together she knew him better than anyone.

So despite the closeness they shared he remained at a loss when he tried to label the emotion he felt while holding her close. Right now she wasn't visible, hidden in the depths of the data crystal as she rested after their ordeal. She had almost been corrupted by Gravemind and destroyed. The effort to reach out to Chief had strained her. She needed to rest, like any human. Like he did. Yet he didn't feel nearly as tired as he should have. Logic told him that it was the adrenaline still coursing in his veins. He would feel the crash soon but he would soldier on because he had to. But he would let Cortana rest for this moment, because that feeling was still there, warming him as much as her voice did. Because even though he should be grilling her for any pertinent information on Gravemind as they moved to the next installation, he was feeling concerned about her. This was a new feeling, similar to what he felt for his fellow Spartans. More than respect, it felt like devotion and warm affection. It felt like home.

He slipped the crystal into his helmet's neural interface and smiled behind the visor as they reconnected. The sound of her voice made the smile widen.

"Just keep your head down. There's two of us in here now. Remember?"
The way it should be.

And I totally skipped some awesome dialogue but it didn't fit with the theme of the story so I left it out. Forgive me for my tiny little foray into Halo. I couldn't help myself. And please no comments about inaccuracies. I am perfectly aware of how little I know when it comes to technical stuff. I pretty much bluffed my way through the story.

End
file.